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LETTERS
OF
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE PRINCE OF WALES,
AND
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
WILLIAM PITT,
ON THE PROPOSED
REGENCY, 1788-9.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED, THE
DECLARATION AND PROTEST
OF
THE ROYAL DUKES,
AGAINST THE REGENCY NOW PROPOSED;
AND
MR. PERCEVAL'S ANSWER.

LONDON:

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1810.

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AC 911. 1810. G 46

LETTERS,

&c. &c.

AT the present moment, when the question of the Regency wholly engrosses the public attention, it is conceived that a re-publication of the following interesting Letters, will be highly acceptable. The first is from Mr. Pitt to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, with his proposed Plan for the establishment of a Regency, in December, 1788; the second is His Royal Highness's Answer.

SIR;

The proceedings in Parliament being now brought to a point, which will render it necessary to propose to the House of Commons, the particular measures to be taken for supplying the defect of the personal exer-

cise of the Royal Authority, during the present interval; and your Royal Highness having some time since, signified your pleasure, that any communication on this subject should be in writing, I take the liberty of respectfully intreating your Royal Highness's permission to submit to your consideration the outlines of the Plan, which His Majesty's Confidential Servants humbly conceive, (according to the best judgment which they are able to form), to be proper to be proposed in the present circumstances.

It is their humble opinion, that your Royal Highness should be empowered to exercise the Royal Authority, in the name, and on the behalf, of His Majesty, during His Majesty's illness, and to do all acts which might legally be done by His Majesty; with provisions, nevertheless, that the care of His Majesty's Royal Person, and the management of His Majesty's Household, and the direction and appointment of

the Officers and Servants therein, should be in the Queen, under such regulations as may be thought necessary. That the power to be exercised by your Royal Highness should not extend to the granting any office in reversion, or to the granting, for any other term than during His Majesty's pleasure, any Pension, or any Office whatever, except such as must, by law, be granted for life, or during good behaviour; nor to the granting any Rank or Dignity of the Peerage of this realm, to any person except His Majesty's Issue, who shall have attained the age of twenty-one years. These are the principal points which have occurred to His Majesty's Ministers.

I beg leave to add, that their ideas are formed on the supposition that His Majesty's illness is only temporary, and may be of no long duration. It may be difficult to fix, beforehand, the precise period for which these provisions ought to last; but if, unfor-

tunately, His Majesty's recovery should be protracted to a more distant period than there is reason at present to imagine, it will be open, hereafter, to the wisdom of Parliament, to reconsider these provisions, whenever the circumstances appear to call for it.

If your Royal Highness should be pleased to require any further explanation on the subject, and should condescend to signify your orders, that I should have the honour of attending your Royal Highness for that purpose, or to intimate any other mode in which your Royal Highness may wish to receive such explanation, I shall respectfully wait your Royal Highness's command.

I have the Honour to be,

With the utmost deference and submission,

SIR,

Your Royal Highness's

Most dutiful

And devoted Servant,

W. PITT.

Downing-Street, Tuesday
Night, Dec. 30, 1788.

His Royal Highness's Answer.

The Prince of Wales learns from Mr. Pitt, that the proceedings are now in a train which enables Mr. Pitt, according to the intimation in his former Letter, to communicate to the Prince the Outlines of the Plan, which His Majesty's Confidential Servants conceive proper to be proposed in the present circumstances.

Concerning the steps already taken by Mr. Pitt, the Prince is silent—nothing done by the two Houses of Parliament can be a proper subject of his animadversion; but when, previously to any discussion in Parliament, the outlines of a scheme of Government are sent for his consideration, in which it is proposed that he shall be personally and principally concerned, and by which the Royal Authority, and the public welfare, may be deeply affected, the Prince would be un-

justifiable were he to withhold an explicit declaration of his sentiments. This silence might be construed into a previous approbation of a Plan, the accomplishment of which every motive of duty to his Father and Sovereign, as well as of regard for the public interest, obliges him to consider as injurious to both. In the state of deep distress, in which the Prince, and the whole Royal Family, were involved, by the heavy calamity which has fallen upon the King, and at a moment when Government, deprived of its chief energy and support, seemed peculiarly to need the cordial and united aid of all descriptions of good subjects; it was not expected by the Prince, that a Plan should be offered to his consideration, by which Government was to be rendered difficult, if not impracticable, in the hands of any person intended to represent the King's Authority;—much less the hands of his Eldest Son, the Heir-Apparent of his Kingdoms, and the person most bound to the maintenance of His Ma-

esty's just Prerogatives and Authority, as well as most interested in the happiness, the prosperity, and the glory of the people.

The Prince forbears to remark on the several parts of the sketch of the Plan laid before him; he apprehends it must have been formed with sufficient deliberation, to preclude the possibility of any argument of his producing an alteration of sentiments in the projectors of it. But he trusts, with confidence, to the wisdom and justice of Parliament, when the whole of the subject, and the circumstances with it, shall come under their deliberation.

He observes, therefore, only generally on the heads communicated by Mr. Pitt, and it is with deep regret the Prince makes the observation, that he sees, in the contents of that paper, a project for producing weakness, disorder, and insecurity, in every branch of the administration of affairs. A project

for dividing the Royal Family from each other; for separating the Court from the State, and, therefore, by disjoining Government from its natural and accustomed support, a scheme for disconnecting the authority to command service from the power of animating it by reward, and for allotting to the Prince all the invidious duties of Government, without the means of softening them to the public, by any one act of grace, favour, or benignity.

The Prince's feelings, on contemplating this Plan, are also rendered still more painful to him, by observing that it is not founded on any general principle, but is calculated to infuse jealousies and suspicions, (wholly groundless he trusts), in that quarter whose confidence it will ever be the first pride of his life to merit and obtain.

With regard to the motive and object of the limitations and restrictions proposed, the

Prince can have but little to observe. No light or information is offered him by His Majesty's Ministers on these points. They have informed him what the powers are which they mean to refuse him, not why they are withheld.

The Prince, however, holding as he does, that it is an undoubted and fundamental principle of the Constitution, that the Powers and Prerogatives of the Crown are vested there as a trust for the benefit of the people, and that they are sacred only as they are necessary to the preservation of that poise and balance of the Constitution, which experience has proved to be the true security of the liberty of the subject, must be allowed to observe, that the plea of public utility ought to be strong, manifest, and urgent, which calls for the extinction or suspension of any one of those essential rights in the Supreme Power or its Representative; or which can justify the Prince in consenting, that in his person an

experiment shall be made, to ascertain with how small a portion of the Kingly Power the Executive Government of this Country may be carried on.

The Prince has only to add, that if security for His Majesty's re-possessing his rightful Government, whenever it shall please Providence, in bounty to the Country, to remove the calamity with which he is afflicted, be any part of the object of this Plan, the Prince has only to be convinced that any measure is necessary, or even conducive to that end, to be the first to urge it, as the preliminary and paramount consideration of any settlement in which he would consent to share.

If attention to what is presumed to be His Majesty's feelings and wishes on the happy day of his recovery, be the object, it is with the truest sincerity the Prince expresses his firm conviction, that no event would be more repugnant to the feelings of His Royal

Father, than the knowledge, that the Government of his Son and Representative had exhibited the Sovereign Power in a state of degradation, of curtailed authority, and diminished energy—a state hurtful in practice, to the prosperity and good government of his People, and injurious, in its precedent, to the security of the Monarch, and the rights of his Family.

Upon that part of the Plan which regards the King's real and personal property, the Prince feels himself compelled to remark, that it was not necessary for Mr. Pitt, nor proper, to suggest to the Prince, the restraint he proposes against the Prince's granting away the King's real and personal property. The Prince does not conceive, that during the King's life he is by law entitled to make any such grant; and he is sure that he has never shewn the smallest inclination to possess any such power. But it remains with Mr. Pitt to consider the eventual interests of the Royal

Family, and to provide a proper and natural security against the mismanagement of them by others.

The Prince has discharged an indispensable duty, in thus giving his free opinion on the Plan submitted to his consideration. His conviction of the evils which may arise to the King's interests, to the peace and happiness of the Royal Family, and to the safety and welfare of the Nation, from the Government of the country remaining any longer in its present maimed and debilitated state, outweighs, in the Prince's mind, every other consideration, and will determine him to undertake the painful trust imposed upon him by the present melancholy necessity, which, of all the King's subjects, he deploras the most, in full confidence that the affection and loyalty to the King, the experienced attachment to the House of Brunswick, and the generosity which has always distinguished this Nation, will carry him through the many

difficulties inseparable from this most critical situation, with comfort to himself, with honour to the King, and with advantage to the Public.

(Signed)

GEORGE P.

*Carlton-House, }
January 2d, 1789. }*

DECLARATION AND PROTEST

OF

THE ROYAL DUKES.

When His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales received the Letter from Mr. Perceval, with the proposed Plan for the establishment of a Regency, which it was his intention to submit to the House of Commons; His Royal Highness immediately communicated the contents to all the Royal Dukes; upon which, it is understood, they unanimously drew up a Declaration and Protest, against the proposed Plan, and form of Proceeding, and which they addressed to Mr. Perceval. It stated in substance,

That understanding from His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, that it was intended to propose to the two Houses, the measure of supplying the Royal Authority, by the appointment of a Regency, with certain limita-

ions and restrictions; they felt it their duty to declare, that it was the unanimous opinion of all the male branches of His Majesty's Family, that they could not view this mode of proceeding without alarm, as a Regency so restricted, was inconsistent with the Prerogatives which were vested in the Royal Authority, as much for the security and benefit of the People, as for the strength and dignity of the Crown itself; and they, therefore, must solemnly protest against this violation of the principles which placed their Family on the Throne.

This Royal Protest was signed by

FREDERIC, Duke of York.

WILLIAM HENRY, Duke of Clarence.

EDWARD, Duke of Kent.


ERNEST AUGUSTUS, Duke of Cumberland.

AUGUSTUS FREDERIC, Duke of Sussex.

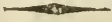
ADOLPHUS FREDERIC, Duke of Cambridge.

WILLIAM FREDERIC, Duke of Gloucester.

*Mr. Perceval's Answer to the Royal
Protest.*



On Mr. Perceval's receiving the preceding Declaration and Protest, he communicated it to the rest of His Majesty's Confidential Servants; after which he transmitted the following Answer to Their Royal Highnesses.



Mr. Perceval has the Honour of acknowledging the receipt of a solemn Protest, in the name of all the Male Branches of the Royal Family, against the measures which His Majesty's Confidential Servants have thought to be their duty to communicate to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, as intended to be proposed to the two Houses of Parliament, for the establishment of a restricted Regency during the continuance of His Majesty's ever-to-be-lamented indispo-

sition; and stating, that Their Royal Highnesses consider these measures as perfectly unconstitutional, and contrary to, and subversive of, the principles which seated His Majesty's Royal Family upon the Throne of this Realm.

Mr. Perceval has felt it to be his duty to submit this Communication without loss of time to His Majesty's Servants; and deeply as they lament, that the measure which they have thought themselves bound to propose, shall appear to Their Royal Highnesses to deserve a character so directly contrary to that which it has been their anxious endeavour should belong to it, they must still, however, have the consolation of reflecting, that the principles upon which they have acted, obtained the express and concurrent support of the two Houses of Parliament in the years 1788 and 1789; that those Houses of Parliament had the high satisfaction of receiving, by the command of His Majesty,

after His Majesty's recovery, his warmest acknowledgments for the additional proofs they had given of their affectionate attachment to his Person, and of their zealous concern for the honour and interests of his Crown, and the security and good government of his Dominions; and that the uninterrupted confidence which His Majesty was pleased to repose, for a long series of years, in the Persons who proposed the measures which were grounded on those principles, entitles His Majesty's Servants, in their judgment, still further to conclude, that those principles and measures had the sanction of His Royal Approbation.

Downing-Street, Dec. 20, 1810.

*His Royal Highness the Duke of York,
&c. &c. &c.*





